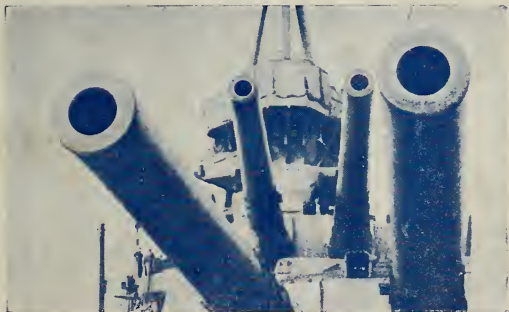


# THE BATTLE OF JUTLAND

BY

JOHN BUCHAN.



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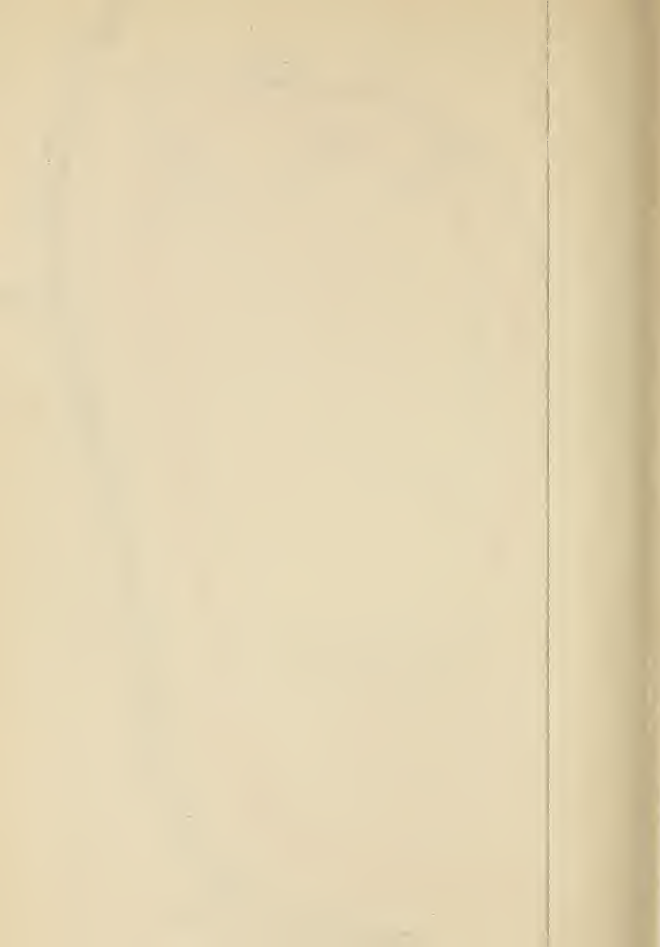
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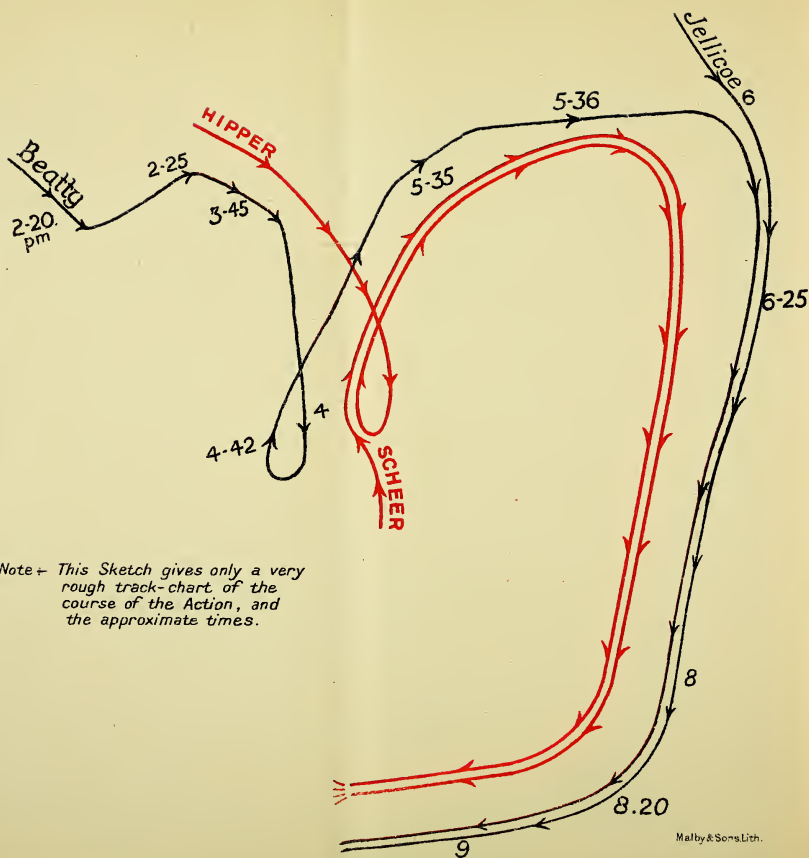
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ADMIRAL SIR JOHN R. JELlicoe, G.C.B., G.C.V.O.



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H.M.S. "IRON DUKE."

# The Battle of Jutland.

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## PRELIMINARIES.

From the opening of the war the British Navy had been sustained by the hope that some day and somewhere they would meet the German High Sea Fleet in a battle in the open sea. It had been their hope since the hot August day when the great battleships disappeared from the eyes of watchers on the English shores. It had comforted them in the long months of waiting amid the winds and snows of the northern seas. Since the beginning of the year 1916 this hope had become a confident belief. There was no special ground for it, except the general one that as the case of Germany became more desperate she would be forced to use every asset in the struggle. As the onslaught on Verdun grew more costly and fruitless, and as the armies of Russia began to stir with the approach of

summer, it seemed that the hour for the gambler's throw might soon arrive.

The long vigil was trying to the nerve and temper of every sailor, and in especial to the Battle Cruiser Fleet, which represented the first line of British sea strength. It was the business of the battle cruisers to make periodical sweeps through the North Sea, and to be first upon the scene should the enemy appear. They were the advance guard, the *corps de choc* of the Grand Fleet; they were the hounds which must close with the quarry and hold it till the hunters of the Battle Fleet arrived. Hence the task of their Commander was one of peculiar anxiety and strain. At any moment the chance might come, so he must be sleeplessly watchful. He would have to make sudden and grave decisions, for it was certain that the longed-for opportunity would have to be forced before it matured. To bring the enemy to action risks must be run, and the strength of a fleet is a more brittle and less replaceable thing than the strength of an army. New levies can be called for on land, and tolerable infantry turned out in a few months,

but it takes six years to make a junior naval officer, it takes two years to build a cruiser, and three years to replace a battleship. The German hope was by attrition or some happy accident to wear down the superior British strength to an equality with their own. A rash act on the part of a British Admiral might fulfil that hope ; but on the other hand, without boldness, even rashness, Britain could not get to grips with her evasive foe.

So far Sir David Beatty and the battle cruisers had not been fortunate. We must not regard the North Sea at the time as an area where only British and neutral flags were flown. From the shelter of the mine-strewn waters around Heligoland the German warships made occasional excursions, for they could not rot for ever in harbour. Germany's battle cruisers had more than once raided the English coasts. Her battleships had made stately progresses in short circles in the vicinity of the Jutland and Schleswig shores. But so far Sir David Beatty had been unlucky. At the battle of the Bight of Heligoland on August 28th, 1914, his great ships had encountered nothing

more serious than enemy cruisers. At the time of the raid on Hartlepool in December of the same year he had just failed, owing to fog, to intercept the raiders. In the battle of the Dogger Bank on January 24th, 1915, an accident to his flagship had prevented him destroying the whole German fleet of battle cruisers. It was clear that the German fleet, if caught in one of their hurried sorties, would not fight unless they had a very clear advantage. Hence, if the battle was to be joined at all, it looked as if the first stage, at all events, must be fought by Britain against long odds.

On Tuesday afternoon, May 30th, the bulk of the British Grand Fleet left its bases on one of its customary sweeps. It sailed in two divisions. To the north was the Battle Fleet under Sir John Jellicoe—the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Battle Squadrons: one Battle Cruiser Squadron, the 3rd, under Rear-Admiral the Honourable Horace Hood; the 1st Cruiser Squadron under Rear-Admiral Sir Robert Arbuthnot, Bart.; the 2nd Cruiser Squadron under Rear-Admiral Heath; the 4th Light Cruiser Squadron under Commodore Le

Mesurier, and the 4th, 11th, and 12th Destroyer Flotillas. Further south moved the Battle-Cruiser Fleet under Sir David Beatty—the 1st and 2nd Battle-Cruiser Squadrons, the 5th Battle Squadron under Rear-Admiral Evan-Thomas, containing four ships of the *Queen Elizabeth* class, the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Light Cruiser Squadrons, and the 1st, 9th, 10th and 13th Destroyer Flotillas. It will be noticed that the two divisions of the Grand Fleet were not sharply defined by battleships and battle cruisers, for Sir John Jellicoe had with him one squadron of battle cruisers, and Sir David Beatty had one squadron of the largest battleships.

On the morning of the last day of May the German High Sea Fleet also put to sea and sailed north a hundred miles or so from the Jutland coast. First went Admiral von Hipper's Battle Cruisers, five in number, with the usual complement of cruisers and destroyers. Following them came the Battle Fleet under Admiral von Scheer. With a few exceptions all the capital ships of the German Navy were present in this expedition. What the purpose

of von Scheer was we can only guess. Warned of the British sailing, he may have hoped to engage and destroy a portion of the British Fleet before the remainder came to its aid. He may have contemplated a raid upon some part of the British coast. He may have been escorting cruisers which were to make a dash for open sea and act as commerce destroyers. Or there may have been some far-reaching design associated with the sea war against Russia. It is idle to speculate on the precise reason which brought out von Scheer, but it seems probable that it was no mere practice cruise. German public opinion was beginning to demand some proof of naval activity since the submarine campaign had languished. It may be that von Scheer's enterprise was a gamble forced upon him by the state of popular feeling at home.

The last week of May had been hot and bright on shore, with low winds and clear heavens, but on the North Sea there lay a light summer haze, and on the last day of May loose grey clouds were beginning to overspread the sky. Sir David Beatty, having



completed his sweep to the south, had turned north about mid-day to rejoin Sir John Jellicoe. The sea was dead calm, like a sheet of glass. His Light Cruiser Squadrons formed a screen in front of him from east to west.

At 2.20 p.m. *Galatea* (Commodore Alexander-Sinclair), the flagship of the 1st Light Cruiser Squadron, signalled enemy vessels to the east. Sir David Beatty at once altered course to south-south-east, the direction of the Horn Reef, in order to get between the enemy and his base.

Five minutes later *Galatea* signalled again that the enemy was in force and no mere handful of light cruisers. At 2.35 the watchers on *Lion* saw a heavy pall of smoke to the eastward, and the course was accordingly altered to that direction, and presently to the N.E. The 1st and 3rd Light Cruiser Squadrons spread in a screen before the battle cruisers. A seaplane was sent up from *Engadine* (once the Cunard Liner *Campania*) at 3.8, and at 3.30 its first report was received. Flying at a height of 900 feet, within two miles of hostile light cruisers, it was able to identify the enemy.

Sir David Beatty promptly formed line of battle, and a minute later came in sight of von Hipper's five battle cruisers.

### **The First Stage, 3.48 p.m. to 5 p.m.**

Of all human contests a naval battle makes the greatest demands upon the resolution and gallantry of the men and the skill and coolness of the commanders. In a land fight the General may be thirty miles behind the line of battle, but the Admiral is in the thick of it. He takes the same risk as the ordinary sailor, and, as often as not, his flagship leads the fleet. For three hundred years it had been the special pride of Britain that her ships were ready to meet any enemy at any time on any sea. If this proud boast were no longer hers, then her glory would indeed have departed.

At 3.30 that afternoon Sir David Beatty had to make a momentous decision. The enemy was clearly falling back upon his main Battle Fleet, and every mile the British Admiral moved forward brought him nearer to an unequal combat. For the moment the odds



VICE-ADMIRAL SIR DAVID BEATTY, K.C.B., K.C.V.O., D.S.O.



FIRING A SALVO.

were in his favour, since he had six battle cruisers against von Hipper's five, as well as the 5th Battle Squadron, but presently the odds would be enormously against him. He was faced with the alternative of conducting a half-hearted running fight with von Hipper, to be broken off before the German Battle Fleet was reached, or of engaging closely and hanging on even after the junction with von Scheer had been made. In such a fight the atmospheric conditions would compel him to close the range and so lose the advantage of his heavier guns ; and his own battle cruisers were less stoutly protected than those of the enemy, which had the armour of a first-class battleship. Sir David Beatty was never for a moment in doubt. He chose the course which was not only heroic, but right on every ground of strategy. Naval battles are not won by playing for safety. Hawke pursued Conflans in a stormy dusk into Quiberon Bay, and Nelson before the battle of the Nile risked in the darkness the shoals and reefs of an uncharted sea. Twice already by a narrow margin Beatty had missed bringing the German capital ships to action. He was resolved

that now he would forego no chance which the fates might send.

Von Hipper was steering E.S.E. in the direction of his base. Beatty changed his course to conform and the fleets were now some 23,000 yards apart. The 2nd Light Cruiser Squadron took station ahead with the destroyers of the 9th and 13th Flotillas ; then came the 1st Battle Cruiser Squadron led by *Lion* ; then the 2nd, and then Evan-Thomas with the 5th Battle Squadron. Beatty formed his ships on a line of bearing to clear the smoke—that is, each ship took station on a compass bearing from the flagship, of which they were diagonally astern. At 3.48 the action began, both sides opening fire at the same moment. The range was 18,500 yards, the direction was generally S.S.E., and both fleets were moving at full speed, an average perhaps of 25 knots. The wind was from the S.E., the visibility for the British was good, and the sun was behind them. They had ten capital ships to the German five. The omens seemed propitious for victory.

In all battles there is a large element of

sheer luck and naked caprice. In the first stage, when Beatty had the odds in his favour, he was destined to suffer his chief losses. A fortunate shot struck *Indefatigable* (Captain Sowerby) in a vital place and she immediately blew up. The German gunnery at the start was uncommonly good; it was only later when things went ill with them that their shooting became wild. Meantime the 5th Battle Squadron had come into action at a range of 20,000 yards and engaged the rear enemy ships. From 4.15 onward for half-an-hour the duel between the battle cruisers was intense, and the enemy fire gradually grew less rapid as ours increased. At 4.18 the German battle cruiser third in the line was seen to be on fire. Presently *Queen Mary* (Captain Prowse) was hit and blew up. She had been at the battle of the Bight of Heligoland, she was perhaps the best gunnery ship in the fleet, and her loss left Beatty with only four battle cruisers. Happily she did not go down before her superb marksmanship had taken heavy toll of the enemy. The haze was now settling on the waters and all that we could see of the foe was a blurred outline. The sea was

full of submarines, but by singular good fortune the British ships passed through them without mishap.

Meantime, as the great vessels raced southward, the lighter craft were fighting a battle of their own. Eight destroyers of the 13th Flotilla—*Nestor*, *Nomad*, *Nicator*, *Narborough*, *Pelican*, *Petard*, *Obdurate* and *Nerissa*, together with *Moorsom* and *Morris*, of the 10th, and *Turbulent* and *Termagant*, of the 9th, moved out at 4.15 for a torpedo attack, at the same time as the enemy destroyers came forward for the same purpose. The British Flotilla at once came into action at close quarters with 15 destroyers and a light cruiser of the enemy, and beat them back with the loss of two destroyers. This combat had made some of them drop astern, so a full torpedo attack was impossible. *Nestor*, *Nomad* and *Nicator*, under Commander the Honourable E. B. S. Bingham, fired two torpedoes at the German battle cruisers and were sorely battered themselves by the German secondary armament. They clung to their task till the turning movement came which we shall presently record, and



the result of it was to bring them within close range of many enemy battle ships. Both *Nestor* and *Nomad* were badly hit, and only *Nicator* regained the Flotilla. Some of the others fired their torpedoes, and apparently the rear German ship was struck. The gallantry of these smaller craft cannot be overpraised. That subsidiary battle, fought under the canopy of the duel of the greater ships, was one of the most heroic episodes of the action.

We have seen that the 2nd Light Cruiser Squadron was scouting ahead of the battle cruisers. At 4.38 *Southampton* (Commodore Goodenough) reported the German Battle Fleet ahead. Instantly Beatty recalled the destroyers, and at 4.42 von Scheer was sighted to the S.E. Beatty put his helm to the starboard and swung round to a northerly course. From the pursuer he had now become the pursued, and his aim was to lead the combined enemy fleets towards Sir John Jellicoe. The 5th Battle Squadron, led by Evan-Thomas in *Barham*, now hard at it with von Hipper, was ordered to follow suit. Meanwhile

*Southampton* and the 2nd Light Cruiser Squadron continued forward to observe, and did not turn till within 13,000 yards of von Scheer's battle ships and under their fire. At 5 o'clock Beatty's battle cruisers were steering north—*Fearless* and the 1st Destroyer Flotilla leading; the 1st and 3rd Light Cruiser Squadrons on his starboard bow; and the 2nd Light Cruiser Squadron on his port quarter. Behind him came Evan-Thomas, attended by *Champion* and the destroyers of the 13th Flotilla.

### **The Second Stage, 5 p.m. to 6.30 p.m.**

It is not difficult to guess what was in the mind of von Scheer and von Hipper. They had had the good fortune to destroy two of Beatty's battle cruisers, and now that their whole fleet was together they hoped to destroy more. It seems clear that the weather conditions that afternoon made Zeppelins useless, and, accordingly, they knew nothing of Jellicoe's presence in the North. They believed they had caught Beatty cruising on his own account, and that the gods had delivered him into their

hands. From 4.45 till 6 o'clock to the mind of the German Admirals the battle resolved itself into a British flight and a German pursuit.

The case presented itself otherwise to Sir David Beatty, who knew that the British Battle Fleet was some fifty miles off, and that it was his business to coax the Germans towards it. He was fighting now against heavy odds, eight capital ships as against at least nineteen, but he had certain real advantages. He had the speed of the enemy, and this enabled him to overlap their line and to get his battle cruisers on their bow. In the race southward he had driven his ships at full speed, and consequently his squadron had been in two divisions, for Evan-Thomas's battleships had not the pace of the battle cruisers. But when he headed north he reduced his pace, and there was no longer a tactical division of forces. The eight British ships were now one fighting unit.

It was Beatty's intention to nurse his pursuers into the arms of Jellicoe. For this his superior speed gave him a vital weapon. Once the northerly course had been entered

upon the enemy could not change direction, except in a very gradual curve, without exposing himself to enfilading fire from the British battle cruisers at the head of the line. He was, as the French say, *accroché*, and, though in a sense he was the pursuer and so had the initiative, yet as a matter of fact his movements were mainly controlled by Sir David Beatty's will. That the British Admiral should have seen and reckoned with this fact in the confusion of a battle against odds is not the least of the proofs of his sagacity and fortitude.

Unfortunately, the weather changed for the worse. The British ships were silhouetted against a clear westerly sky, but the enemy was shrouded in mist, and only at rare intervals showed dim shapes through the gloom. The range was about 14,000 yards. In spite of the difficulties the British gunnery was singularly effective. One German battle cruiser—perhaps the *Lutzow*—fell out of the line in a broken condition, and others of their ships showed signs of increasing distress. As before, the lesser craft played a gallant part. At 5.5 *Onslow* and *Moresby*, who had been helping

*Engadine* with the seaplane, took station on the engaged bow of *Lion*, and the latter struck with a torpedo the sixth ship in the German line and set it on fire. She then passed south to clear the range of smoke and took station on the 5th Battle Squadron. At 5.33 Sir David Beatty's course was N.N.E., and he was gradually hauling round to the north-eastward. He knew that the Battle Fleet could not be far off and he was heading the Germans on an easterly course so that Jellicoe should be able to strike to the best advantage. At 5.50 on his port bow he sighted British cruisers and six minutes later had a glimpse of the leading ships of the Battle Fleet five miles to the north. He at once changed course to east and increased speed, bringing the range down to 12,000 yards. He was forcing the enemy to a course on which the British Battle Fleet might overwhelm them.

We must now turn to the doings of the Battle Fleet itself. When Sir John Jellicoe was informed that the enemy had been sighted he was distant from Beatty between 50 and 60 miles. He at once proceeded at full speed on a course south-east by south to join the battle

cruisers. The engine rooms made heroic efforts, and the whole fleet maintained a speed in excess of the trial speeds of some of the older vessels. The Commander-in-Chief's own tribute deserves quotation :—" It must never be forgotten that the prelude to action is the work of the engine-room department, and that during action the officers and men of that department perform their most important duties without the incentive which a knowledge of the course of the action gives to those on deck. The qualities of discipline and endurance are taxed to the utmost under these conditions, and they were, as always, most fully maintained throughout the operations now reviewed. Several ships attained speeds that had never before been reached, thus showing very clearly their high state of steaming efficiency." It was no easy task to effect a junction at the proper moment, since there was an inevitable difference in estimating the rendezvous by "reckoning." Moreover, the hazy weather made it hard to recognise which ships were enemy and which were British when the moment of meeting came.

The 3rd Battle Cruiser Squadron under Rear-Admiral Hood led the Battle Fleet. At 5.30 Hood observed flashes of gun fire and heard the sound of guns to the south-westward. He sent *Chester* (Captain Lawson) to investigate, and at 5.45 this ship engaged three or four enemy light cruisers. For twenty minutes the fight continued against heavy odds, and here occurred one of the most conspicuous instances of gallantry in the battle. Boy (1st Class) John Travers Cornwell was mortally wounded early in the fight, and all the crew of the gun where he was stationed lay dead or dying around him. He nevertheless remained alone at his post, waiting orders, and exposed to constant fire. He was only sixteen and a half and he did not live to receive the reward of his courage. "I recommend his case for special recognition," wrote Sir David Beatty, "in justice to his memory and as an acknowledgment of the high example set by him."

*Chester* rejoined the 3rd Battle Cruiser Squadron at 6.5. Hood was too far to the east, so he turned north-westward and five minutes later sighted Beatty. He received

orders to take station ahead, and at 6.20 he led the line, "bringing his squadron into action ahead in a most inspiring manner, worthy of his great naval ancestors." He was now only 8,000 yards from the enemy and under a desperate fire. His flagship, *Invincible*, was sunk, and with it perished an Admiral who in faithfulness and courage must rank with the heroic figures of British naval history. This was at the head of the British line. Meantime the 1st and 2nd Cruiser Squadrons accompanying the Battle Fleet had also come into action. *Defence* and *Warrior* had sunk an enemy light cruiser about 6 o'clock. *Canterbury*, which was in company with the 3rd Battle Cruiser Squadron, had engaged enemy light cruisers and destroyers which were attacking the destroyers *Shark*, *Acasta* and *Christopher*—an engagement in which *Shark* was sunk. A survivor of *Shark* has described the scene. "Right ahead of us and close at hand, we saw two columns of German destroyers. We were racing along at the time, and our skipper took us at full speed right towards the enemy lines. There was a column of their small craft on each side of us,



and as soon as we got abreast of them we attacked at close range, and managed to torpedo a couple of enemy destroyers, one on each beam. All the time we were getting it hot, guns were popping at us from all quarters, and we were firing back as hard as we could go, as well as using our torpedo tubes. Of course, a fight under these conditions could not last long for us. We had been engaged about ten minutes when two torpedoes hit fairly, one on each side of our ship and ripped three holes in her, so that she sank almost at once." At 6.16 the 1st Cruiser Squadron had got into a position between the German and British Battle Fleets, since owing to the mist Sir Robert Arbuthnot was not aware of the enemy's approach until he was in close proximity to them. *Defence* was sunk, *Warrior* passed to the rear disabled, and *Black Prince* received damage which led later to her destruction.

Meantime Beatty's lighter craft had also been hotly engaged. At 6.5 *Onslow* sighted an enemy light cruiser 6,000 yards off which was trying to attack *Lion* with torpedoes, and at once closed and engaged at a range from 4,000

to 2,000 yards. She then closed the German Battle Cruisers, but after firing one torpedo she was struck amidships by a heavy shell. Undefeated, she fired her remaining three torpedoes at the enemy Battle Fleet. She was then taken in tow by *Defender*, who was herself damaged, and in spite of constant shelling the two gallant destroyers managed to retire in safety. "I consider the performances of these two destroyers," wrote Sir David Beatty, "to be gallant in the extreme, and I am recommending Lieut.-Commander J. C. Tovey of *Onslow* and Lieut.-Commander L. R. Palmer of *Defender* for special recognition." Again, the 3rd Light Cruiser Squadron under Rear-Admiral Napier, which was well ahead of the enemy on Beatty's starboard bow, attacked with torpedoes at 6.25, *Falmouth* and *Yarmouth* especially distinguishing themselves. One German battle cruiser was observed to be hit and to fall out of the line.

From a quarter to six to 6.50, while the two British Fleets were coming into line, the situation was highly delicate, and the fighting was necessarily intricate and confused. The

position at 6.50 was shortly as follows. Beatty had turned the German van and his course from 6.50 onward was S.E., gradually moving towards S. The 1st and 2nd Battle Cruiser Squadrons led; then the 3rd Battle Cruiser Squadron; then followed the divisions of the Battle Fleet—first the 2nd Battle Squadron under Vice-Admiral Sir Thomas Jerram, then the 4th, containing Sir John Jellicoe's flagship *Iron Duke*, and finally the 1st, under Vice-Admiral Sir Cecil Burney. In the weather conditions it was impossible to work the Fleet by independent divisions, so the formation adopted was a single line.

Evan-Thomas's 5th Battle Squadron, which had up to now been with Beatty, intended to form ahead of the Battle Fleet, but the nature of the deployment compelled it to form astern. *Warspite* had her steering-gear damaged and drifted towards the enemy's line, under a furious cannonade. For a little she involuntarily interposed herself between *Warrior* and the enemy's fire. Matters were presently put right, but it is a curious proof of the caprice of fortune in battle that while a single shot

at the beginning of the action sunk *Indefatigable*, this intense bombardment did *Warspite* little harm. Only one gun turret was hit and her engines were uninjured.

At 6.50, then, the two British Fleets were united, the German line was headed off on the east, and Beatty and Jellicoe were working their way between the enemy and his home ports. "The grandest sight I have ever seen," wrote an eye-witness, "was the sight of our battle line—miles of it fading into mist—taking up their positions like clockwork and then belching forth great sheets of fire and clouds of smoke." The enemy was now greatly outnumbered and the skill of the British Admirals had won a complete strategic success. But the fog was deepening and the night was falling. It looked as if daylight might be wanting to give the British a chance of winning a decisive victory.

### **The Third Stage, 6.50 p.m. to 9.0 p.m.**

The third stage of the battle—roughly two hours long—was an intermittent duel





PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN BY AN C



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ICER DURING THE BATTLE.





between the main fleets. Admiral von Scheer had no wish to linger, and he moved southward at his best speed with the British line shepherding him on the east. We have seen the nature of the British dispositions at this moment. The whole fleet now formed one fighting unit, but it will be clearer if we take the work of the battle cruisers and the battleships separately.

Beatty had succeeded in crumpling up the head of the German line, and its battleships were now targets for the majority of his battle cruisers. The visibility was becoming greatly reduced. The mist no longer merely veiled the targets, but often shut them out altogether. This not only made gunnery extraordinarily difficult, but prevented the British from keeping proper contact with the enemy. At the same time such light as there was was more favourable to Beatty and Jellicoe than to von Scheer. The German ships showed up at intervals against the sunset, as did Cradock's cruisers off Coronel, and gave the British gunners their chance.

Of the effects of the gunnery an extract from an officer's letter gives some conception.

“ One of our 12-inch gun ships put her salvos into a German ship so accurately that the enemy vessel heeled right over under the heavy blows. Of course, the German went out of action. If the 12-inch gun could do this to a ship how much more destructive must be the well-directed fire from 15-inch or 13.5-inch guns. . . . It was the big calibre that told, and it was a gunner's battle. Our gunnery was better at all points than that of the enemy.”

From 7 o'clock onward Beatty was steering south and gradually bearing round to southwest and west in order to get into touch with the enemy. At 7.14 he sighted them at a range of 15,000 yards—two battle cruisers and two battleships of the *Koenig* class. The sun had now fallen behind the western clouds, and at 7.17 Beatty increased speed to 22 knots and re-engaged. The enemy showed signs of great distress, one ship being on fire and one dropping astern. The destroyers at the head of the line emitted volumes of smoke which covered the ships behind with a pall and enabled them at 7.45 to turn away and pass out of Beatty's sight.

At 7.58 the 1st and 3rd Light Cruiser Squadrons were ordered to sweep westward and locate the head of the enemy's line, and at 8.20 Beatty altered course to west to support. He located three battle cruisers or battleships and engaged them at 10,000 yards range. *Lion* repeatedly hit the leading ship, which turned away in flames with a heavy list to port, while *Princess Royal* set fire to one battleship, and the third ship under the attack of *New Zealand* and *Indomitable*, hauled out of the line heeling over and on fire. Once more the mist descended and enveloped the enemy, which passed out of sight to the west. Then came a strange shock which sent a quiver through every British ship as if a mine or a shoal had been struck. Some great enemy vessel had blown up somewhere in the mist to the westward.

To turn to the Battle Fleet, which had become engaged at 6.17 p.m., during deployment, with battleships of the *Kaiser* class. It first took course south-east by east, but as it endeavoured to close it bore round to westward. The aim of von Scheer now was escape and

nothing but escape, and every device was used to screen his ships from British sight. Owing partly to the smoke palls and the clouds emitted by the destroyers, but mainly to the mist, it was never possible to see more than four or five enemy ships at a time. The ranges were roughly from 9,000 to 12,000 yards and the action began with the British Battle Fleet on the enemy's bow. Under the British attack the enemy constantly turned away, and this had the effect of bringing Jellicoe to a position of less advantage on the enemy's quarter. At the same time it put the British fleet between von Scheer and his base.

In the short periods, however, during which the Germans were visible, they received a heavy fire and were constantly hit. Some were observed to haul out of line and at least one was seen to sink. The German return fire at this stage was feeble, and the damage caused to our battleships was trifling. Von Scheer relied for defence chiefly on torpedo attacks which were favoured by the weather and the British position. A following fleet can make small use of torpedoes, as the enemy is moving

away from it ; while the enemy, on the other hand, has the advantage in this weapon since his targets are moving towards him. Many German torpedoes were fired, but the only battleship hit was *Marlborough*, which was happily able to remain in line and continue the action.

The 1st Battle Squadron under Sir Cecil Burney came into action at 6.17 with the third German Battle Squadron at a range of 11,000 yards ; but as the fight continued the range decreased to 9,000 yards. This Squadron received most of the enemy's return fire, but it administered severe punishment. Take the case of *Marlborough* (Captain George P. Ross). At 6.17 she began by firing seven salvos at a ship of the *Kaiser* class ; she then engaged a cruiser and a battleship ; at 6.54 she was hit by a torpedo ; at 7.3 she re-opened the action ; and at 7.12 fired fourteen salvos at a ship of the *Koenig* class, hitting her repeatedly till she turned out of line. *Colossus* of the same Squadron was hit, but only slightly damaged, and several other ships were frequently straddled by the enemy's fire.

The 4th Battle Squadron in the centre was engaged with ships of the *Koenig* and the *Kaiser* class, as well as with battle cruisers and light cruisers. Sir John Jellicoe's flagship *Iron Duke* engaged one of the *Koenig* class at 6.30 at a range of 12,000 yards, quickly straddled it, and hit it repeatedly from the second salvo onwards till it turned away. The 2nd Battle Squadron in the van under Sir Thomas Jerram was in action with German battleships from 6.30 to 7.20 and engaged also a damaged battle cruiser.

In the van of the battle fleet, acting as a link between Jellicoe and Beatty, went Rear-Admiral Heath's 2nd Cruiser Squadron which had now received *Duke of Edinburgh* from the 1st Cruiser Squadron. There also was the 4th Light Cruiser Squadron under Commodore Le Mesurier, which attacked enemy destroyers at 7.20 p.m. and again at 8.18 in support of the 11th Destroyer Flotilla. In the second attack it came under the fire of the enemy battle fleet at between 6,500 and 8,000 yards. *Calliope*, the flagship, was several times hit, but without serious damage. The light

cruisers attacked the enemy with torpedoes, and at 8.40 an explosion was observed on board a ship of the *Kaiser* class. In these actions four enemy destroyers were sunk by our gun fire.

By 9 o'clock the enemy had completely disappeared and darkness was falling fast. He had been veering round to a westerly course, and the whole British Fleet lay between him and his home ports. It was a strategic situation which, but for the fog and the coming of night, would have meant his complete destruction. Sir John Jellicoe had now to make a difficult decision. It was impossible for the British Fleet to close in the darkness in a sea swarming with torpedo craft and submarines, and accordingly he was compelled to make dispositions for the night, which would ensure the safety of his ships and provide for a renewal of the action at dawn. In his own words :—" I manœuvred to remain between the enemy and his base, placing our Flotillas in a position in which they would afford protection to the fleet from destroyer attack and at the same time be favourably situated for attacking the enemy's heavier ships." About the same

time Sir David Beatty, to the south and westward, had made the same decision on his own account. He informed Sir John Jellicoe of his position and the bearing of the enemy and turned to the course of the Battle Fleet.

### **The Fourth Stage. Night of May 31st-June 1st.**

The night battle was waged on the British side entirely by the lighter craft. It will be remembered that Beatty had with him the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Light Cruiser Squadrons and the 1st, 9th, 10th and 13th Destroyer Flotillas. The 1st and 3rd Light Cruiser Squadrons were continuously in touch with the battle cruisers and usually ahead of them. There they protected the head of the British line from torpedo attack. The 2nd Light Cruiser Squadron was at the rear of the battle line, and at 9 p.m. it repelled a destroyer attack upon Evan-Thomas's battle ships. At 10.20 *Southampton* and *Dublin* were in action with five enemy cruisers, and lost many men during the fifteen minutes fight. At half-past eleven *Birmingham* sighted several heavy ships steering south.



These were some of the enemy battle ships slipping past the British stern in the fog and darkness.

In the rear of the line were also *Fearless* and the 1st Destroyer Flotilla, which during the night observed a battleship of the *Kaiser* class utterly alone and steaming at full speed. This solitary ship seems to have been attacked by destroyers further astern, for presently from that direction came the noise of a heavy explosion. The 13th Flotilla under Captain James Farie in *Champion* was also astern of the Battle Fleet. At half-past twelve on the morning of 1st June, a large vessel crossed its rear, opening a heavy fire as she passed on *Petard* and *Turbulent*. At 3.30 *Champion* was engaged with four enemy destroyers, and an hour before *Moresby* had fired a torpedo with success at four ships of the *Deutschland* class.

Beatty's destroyers having been in action since 4 o'clock in the afternoon, the principal attacks were made by the 4th, 11th and 12th Flotillas which accompanied Jellicoe and which had had less continuous fighting. *Castor*

(Commodore Hawkesley) in the 11th Flotilla, sank an enemy destroyer at point blank range. The 12th Flotilla (Captain Anselan J. B. Stirling) attacked a squadron of six large vessels including some of the *Kaiser* class. The third ship in the line was torpedoed and blew up, and twenty minutes later the fourth ship in the line was also hit. *Onslaught*, of this Flotilla was severely damaged, but Sub-Lieutenant Kemmis and Midshipman Arnot, the only officers not disabled, took the ship out of action and brought her safely home.

The heaviest fighting fell to the lot of the 4th Flotilla under Captain Wintour. Two torpedoes were observed to take effect, but *Tipperary* was sunk with the greater part of its crew. Captain Wintour was killed early in the action, when Lieutenant Kemp took command. Two rafts were got away from the sinking vessel and a number of survivors from them were afterwards picked up, but the young Lieutenant went down with his ship. The British destroyers, of all the vessels engaged in the battle, won perhaps the greatest glory. "They surpassed," wrote Sir John Jellicoe,

“the very highest expectations that I had formed of them.”

An officer on one of the flotillas has described that uneasy darkness. “We couldn’t tell what was happening. Every now and then out of the silence would come *bang, bang, boom*, as hard as it could go for ten minutes on end. The flash of the guns lit up the whole sky for miles and miles, and the noise was far more penetrating than by day. Then you would see a great burst of flame from some poor devil, as the searchlight switched on and off, and then perfect silence once more.” The searchlights at times made the sea as white as marble on which the destroyers moved “black,” wrote an eye witness, “as cockroaches on a floor.”

At earliest dawn on June 1st, the British Fleet, which was lying south and west of the Horn Reef, turned northward to collect its light craft and to search for the enemy. But the enemy was not to be found. Partly he had already slipped in single ships astern of our fleet during the night ; partly he was then engaged

in moving homewards like a flight of wild duck that has been scattered by shot. He was greatly helped by the weather, which at dawn on June 1st was thicker than the night before, the visibility being less than four miles. About 4 o'clock a Zeppelin passed over the British Fleet and no doubt by wireless signalled to any remaining German units where lay the safe passage. All morning till 11 o'clock Sir John Jellicoe waited on the battlefield, watching the lines of approach to German ports and attending the advent of the enemy. But no enemy came. "I was reluctantly compelled to the conclusion," wrote Sir John, "that the High Sea Fleet had returned into port." Till 1.15 p.m. the British fleet swept the seas, picking up survivors from some of the lost destroyers. After that hour waiting was useless, so the fleet sailed for its bases, which were reached next day, Friday, 2nd June. There it fueled and replenished with ammunition, and at 9.30 that evening was ready for further action.

## RESULTS.

The German Fleet, being close to its bases, was able to publish at once its own version of the battle. A resounding success was a political necessity for Germany, and it is likely that she would have claimed a victory if any remnant of her fleets had reached harbour. As it was she was over-joyed at having escaped annihilation, and the magnitude of her jubilation may be taken as the measure of her fears. It is of the nature of a naval action that it gives ample scope for fiction. There are no spectators. Victory and defeat are not followed, as in a land battle, by a gain or loss of ground. A well-disciplined country with a strict censorship can frame any tale it pleases, and stick to it for months without fear of detection at home. Therefore Germany claimed at once a decisive success. According to her press the death blow had been given to Britain's command of the sea. The Kaiser soared into the realms of poetry :—"The gigantic fleet of Albion, ruler of the seas, which since Trafalgar for a hundred years has imposed on the whole world a bond of sea-

tyranny, and has surrounded itself with a nimbus of invincibleness, came into the field. That gigantic Armada approached, and our fleet engaged it. The British Fleet was beaten. The first great hammer blow was struck, and the nimbus of British world supremacy disappeared." Germany announced trivial losses—one old battle ship, *Pommern*, three small cruisers *Wiesbaden*, *Elbing* and *Frauenlob*, and five destroyers.

It is a striking tribute to the prestige of the British Navy that the German fairy tale was received with incredulity in all Allied and in most neutral countries. In a small mountain village in the Apennines, the inhabitants of which, owing to economic difficulties, had small enthusiasm for the war, the news arrived that the British Navy had been beaten. "That is a lie" was the unanimous decision of the village. "Nothing on earth can defeat the British Navy." But false news, once it has started, may be dangerous, and in some quarters in America, even among friends of the Allies, there was at first a disposition to accept the German version. The ordinary man is apt

to judge of a battle, on land or sea, by the crude test of losses. The British Admiralty announced its losses at once with a candour which may have been undiplomatic, but which revealed a proud confidence in the invulnerability of the navy and the steadfastness of the British people. These losses were : one first class battle cruiser, *Queen Mary* ; two lesser battle cruisers, *Indefatigable* and *Invincible* ; three armoured cruisers, *Defence*, *Black Prince* and *Warrior* ; and eight destroyers, *Tipperary*, *Ardent*, *Fortune*, *Shark*, *Sparrowhawk*, *Nestor*, *Nomad* and *Turbulent*. More vital than the ships, was the loss of many gallant men and officers, including some of the most distinguished of the younger Admirals and Captains.

Even if Germany's version of her losses had been true it is scarcely necessary to say that they were heavier than Britain's in proportion to her total strength at sea. But her version was not true ; it was not half the truth. The port of Wilhelmshaven was closed to the world that no man might verify the actual casualties. It is probable that *Pommern*, whose loss was admitted, was not the old *Pommern* of that name

which was believed to have been sunk by Commander Max Horton in the previous July, but a new first-class battle ship. It is not yet possible to estimate the total German losses, owing to the conditions of low visibility during the day battle, and the approach of darkness before the action was completed. Sir John Jellicoe, basing his calculation upon the results of careful enquiries, issued a list that in his opinion gave the minimum as to numbers. According to this list Germany lost two battle ships of the largest class, and one of the *Deutschland* type ; one battle cruiser ; five light cruisers, one of which may have been a battle ship ; six destroyers and one submarine. These were certain and observed losses. In addition, one first-class battle ship, one battle cruiser and three destroyers were seen to be so severely hit that in all likelihood they went down before reaching harbour. It should further be remembered that many of the ships which escaped were so seriously damaged by gun fire and torpedo attack that they would not be available for many months. The German fleet returned to the Elbe bases, lacking some



REAR-ADMIRAL SIR ROBERT K.  
ARBUTHNOT, Bt., C.B., M.V.O.  
*(Killed in Action.)*



*Photo by Russell & Sons, Southsea.*

REAR-ADMIRAL THE HON. HORACE  
L. A. HOOD, C.B., M.V.O., D.S.O.  
*(Killed in Action.)*



*Photo by Russell & Sons, Southsea.*

REAR-ADMIRAL H. EVAN-THOMAS, C.B., M.V.O.



*Photo by Russell & Sons, Southsea.*



of its finest ships, and with most of the remainder out of action.

It is only the ignorant who imagine that the loss of a few ships could mean a weakening of British naval prestige. A fleet, if it is to be better than scrap iron, must be risked gallantly when occasion offers. The real test of success is the fulfilment of a strategic intention. What was Germany's aim? Her major purpose was to destroy the British command of the sea. In that she never came near succeeding. From the moment of von Scheer's return to port the British fleet held the sea and is still holding it. The blockade which Germany thought to break was drawn tighter than ever. Her secondary aim was so to weaken the British Fleet that it should be more nearly on an equality with her own. Again she completely failed, and the margin of British superiority was in no way impaired. Lastly she hoped to isolate and destroy a British division. That, too, failed. The British Battle Cruiser fleet is to-day a living and effective force while the German Battle Cruiser fleet is only a shadow. The result of the battle of May 31st was that

Britain was more confirmed than ever in her mastery of the ocean. Its effect on the campaign at large was at once apparent. Russia was established in her control of the Eastern Baltic, and Germany's grandiose scheme for aiding her Eastern campaign by sea perished in the smoke of the Jutland battle.

One word must be said upon British tactics and strategy. From a technical point of view the battle appears as an example of a tactical division of a fleet, undertaken in order to coax a laggard enemy to battle. Such a plan has, of course, its own risks, but without risks no Admiral or General has ever won success. Criticism and discussion inevitably follow all naval actions, unless, as in the case of Nelson's three battles, they are so obviously conclusive that argument is futile. But if the Battle of Jutland had not the dramatic close of Trafalgar or the Nile, yet, in a true sense, it was decisive. It defeated, utterly defeated, the German plan. If it was not—as with two hours more daylight it would have been—a complete destruction of Germany's sea power, it was a complete demonstration of Britain's crushing

superiority. Sir David Beatty faced great odds and great difficulties in the spirit of Hawke and Nelson.—“He once more showed,” wrote the Commander-in-Chief, “his fine qualities of gallant leadership, firm determination, and correct strategical insight. He appreciated the situation at once on sighting his enemy’s lighter forces, then his battle cruisers, and finally his battle fleet. I can fully sympathise with his feelings when the evening mist and failing light robbed the fleet of that complete victory for which he had manœuvred, and for which the vessels in company with him had striven so hard.” It is a tradition of the British Admiralty that it praises sparingly and only praises when the merit of an achievement is beyond question. The well-chosen words in which it approved Sir John Jellicoe’s leadership are more impressive than the rhetoric of the chiefs of parvenu navies. “The results of the action prove that the officers and men of the Grand Fleet have known both how to study the new problems with which they are confronted and how to turn their knowledge to account. The expectations of the country were high, they have been well fulfilled. My

Lords desire to convey to you their full approval of your proceedings in this action."

Not less conspicuous than the leadership was the amazing fighting quality of the British sailors. It was more than a century since Britain had had the opportunity of a first-class naval action, and it may confidently be said that not even at Trafalgar did the spirit of her seamen shine more brightly. The story of the fighting of a battleship like *Marlborough*, a cruiser like *Southampton*, and destroyers like *Tipperary*, *Onslow* and *Defender* will become part of our national epic. It is no case for the flowers of rhetoric. Such a spirit is best praised not in the literary epithets of the historian but in the simple and heartfelt tribute of the man who guided it. "The conduct of officers and men," wrote Sir John Jellicoe, "throughout the day and night actions was entirely beyond praise. No words of mine can do them justice. On all sides it is reported to me that the glorious traditions of the past were most worthily upheld, whether in heavy ships, cruisers, light cruisers, or destroyers—the same admirable spirit prevailed.



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THE KING ADDRESSING GRAND FLEET CREWS AFTER THE BATTLE.—H.M.S. "WARSPITE" IN THE BACKGROUND.



Officers and men were cool and determined, with a cheeriness that would have carried them through anything. The heroism of the wounded was the admiration of all. I cannot adequately express the pride with which the spirit of the fleet filled me."

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